AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-5 (cancelled)

6. (Previously presented) A shock absorber comprising:

a cylindrical housing adapted to be filled with a damping fluid, said cylindrical housing having an interior;

a piston slidably disposed within said cylindrical housing to divide the interior of said cylindrical housing into an upper working chamber and a lower working chamber;

a passage extending between said upper and lower working chambers and adapted to selectively allow the damping fluid to flow therethrough during movement of said piston, said passage having an upstream end and a downstream end;

a valve seat located adjacent to said downstream end of said passage; and

a valve assembly operable to selectively open and close said passage during movement of said piston, said valve assembly including

(i) a first valve disc held on and deflectable toward said piston, and separated from said valve seat,

(ii) a second valve disc on said first valve disc and normally seated on said valve seat, said second valve disc including circular apertures arranged in a circumferentially spaced relationship and selectively openable and closable by said first valve disc,

(iii) a third valve disc on said second valve disc and having notches arranged in a circumferentially spaced relationship, said notches each having an inner end and an outer end and cooperating with said circular apertures to form ports, said ports being constantly communicated with one of said upper and lower working chambers that is located downstream of said valve seat; and

(iv) a fourth valve disc cooperating with said second valve disc to sandwich said third valve disc so that restrictive orifices are defined at the outer end of each of said notches,

wherein said ports each have a cross sectional area greater than a cross sectional area of each of said restrictive orifices, regardless of a relative angular position between said second and third valve discs.

7. (Previously presented) The shock absorber according to claim 6, wherein said apertures are equally spaced from one another, and said notches are equally spaced from one another, with said apertures all being communicated with said notches regardless of a relative angular position between said second and third valve discs.

8. (Previously presented) The shock absorber according to claim 6, wherein said circular apertures include first circular apertures arranged in a circumferentially equally spaced relationship and second circular apertures arranged in a circumferentially equally spaced relationship, with said second circular apertures being located radially outwardly from said first circular apertures, and with said second circular apertures being angularly displaced from said first circular apertures so that each one of said second circular apertures is positioned between adjacent ones of said first circular apertures.

9. (Previously presented) A piston assembly for a shock absorber, the shock absorber including a cylindrical pressure tube filled with a damping fluid, said piston assembly comprising:

an annular piston element adapted to be slidably disposed within the pressure tube and connected to a piston rod, said piston element including an upper valve seat and a lower valve seat;

a first annular valve disc being deflectable toward and positioned against one side of said annular piston element, and having an outer peripheral edge spaced from said lower valve seat;

a second annular valve disc retained on said first annular valve disc and having an outer peripheral edge to be selectively seated on and unseated from said lower valve seat, said second annular valve disc including circular apertures arranged in a circumferentially spaced relationship;

a third annular valve disc retained on said second annular valve disc and having notches arranged in a circumferentially spaced relationship, said notches each having an inner end and an outer end and cooperating with said circular apertures to form ports; and

a fourth valve disc cooperating with said second annular valve disc to sandwich said third annular valve disc so that restrictive orifices are defined at the outer end of each of said notches, said ports each having a cross sectional area greater than a cross sectional of each of said restrictive orifices regardless of a relative angular position between said second and third annular valve discs.

10. (Previously presented) The piston assembly according to claim 9, wherein said apertures are equally spaced from one another, and said notches are equally spaced from one another, with said apertures all being communicated with said respective notches regardless of a relative angular position between said second and third annular valve discs.

11. (Previously presented) The piston assembly according to claim 9, wherein said circular apertures include first circular apertures arranged in a circumferentially equally spaced relationship and second circular apertures arranged in a circumferentially equally spaced relationship, with said second circular apertures being located radially outwardly from said first circular apertures, and with said second circular apertures being angularly displaced from said first circular apertures so that each one of said second circular apertures is positioned between adjacent ones of said first circular apertures.